

75 YEARS . . .

1898

**GENERATIONS
GROWING
AND
GOING
WITH
GOD**

A
HISTORY
OF
FIRST
MISSIONARY
CHURCH
BERNE, INDIANA

1973

A HISTORY

of

The First Missionary Church

Berne, Indiana

• • •

Its Origin • Its People • Its Leaders

Its Auxiliary Organizations

Its Growth • Its New

Church Home

Its Future

• • •

By
Caroline I. Hirschy
1960

Revised and Extended to 1973
By
Jeanette W. Sprunger
and
Mrs. Homer C. Amstutz

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

*to the memory of faithful laymen and ministers
who by their tireless efforts have, under God,
prepared the way for succeeding generations.*

A HISTORY

"Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee"

Deut. 8:2

In the last decade of the nineteenth century some of the people of Berne and surrounding area experienced a great spiritual awakening. This was the result of the definite and clear message of salvation and sanctification preached by the Rev. A. E. Funk and Dr. A. B. Simpson. Rev. Funk was a member of a German Mennonite church in Pennsylvania. He and Dr. Simpson held revivals as they traveled among the German people in the Middle West.

In the middle nineties Rev. J. A. Sprunger of Berne, and a member of the General Conference Mennonites was led into a new Christian experience. While on a trip to Switzerland he was ordained to the ministry. Later he ministered under the institutional name Light and Hope. He founded deaconess homes and hospitals in Chicago and Cleveland. He founded an orphanage at Berne; here he also conducted a Bible Training School and established a publishing house for the printing of religious literature; he edited and published the monthly magazine "Licht und Hoffnung" which later was printed in English with the name "Light and Hope."

A young minister, Rev. J. E. Ramseyer, of the Defenseless Mennonite Church in Michigan became acquainted with Rev. Funk and Dr. Simpson. Rev. Ramseyer conducted revivals in Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, and Kansas. He preached the sterner truths of the Gospel, including sin and judgment; he emphasized the deeper life or sanctification, divine healing, and the second coming of Christ. He began to preach in English so he could reach more people with the Gospel. These genuine revivals spread their effects over entire communities transforming them by the power of God. The results produced many ministers and missionaries. In the summer of 1896 he held a camp meeting in Berne, also one in the oil field area southwest of Berne.

These ministers believed that there should be a uniting of the German speaking people to expedite cooperation and concerted effort in the propagation of the Gospel, both at home and in foreign lands. In the years of many revivals, missionary passion was quickened. Although no united work resulted at this time, the inspiration of the meetings was projected far into the future. Several families started to meet in homes for religious services.

Rev. Sprunger started a Sunday School, worship services, and prayer meetings at the orphanage for the children and the workers in the home. The Sunday services were held in the afternoon. Some cottage prayer meetings were held in the summer and fall. Rev. Sprunger was pastor, Adam Welty, the school teacher, was superintendent of the



Rev. Sprunger

Sunday School, and song leader. Mrs. Sprunger, the deaconesses, and other workers in the home were Sunday School teachers.

Several German families of the Defenseless Mennonite Church, and a few other people living in Berne and in the nearby rural area started to attend church at the orphanage in 1893. Others came in the next few years. They liked Rev. Sprunger's preaching; they were interested in the children and workers. They often brought food from the farms to them. On other occasions they invited them to their homes.

These families became very much interested in missions, their interest was increased and strengthened by the monthly Mission Band services. Carrie Peters and Anna Sudermann had organized the Band to give more emphasis to missions. Later the two deaconesses were missionaries in India.

Our Mission Band is the outgrowth of these early missionary meetings. It has met regularly through more than half a century, with the missionary emphasis being its objective. The present Mission Band has ten to twelve meetings a year on the Sunday or Wednesday when a home or foreign missionary can be present to give the message. The Mission Band includes everyone in the Church who is interested.

About the year 1895 a need arose for the help of women to sew garments and make bedding for the people in the orphanage. Mrs. Sprunger received help from the women attending the church. They worked together in making many garments and some bedding for the children in the home. They met as a body on the first Thursday afternoon of each month. Much of the machine work was done in homes of the women of the congregation. The Women's Missionary Society is an outgrowth of the work started by Mrs. Sprunger. There are now three departments. Each group meets monthly and has its own missionary project. The groups also cooperate in the support of Mrs. William Harrigan, missionary to Sierra Leone.

The Ladies' Aid, the oldest group, makes bedding and garments for children, especially infants; they furnish funds for some equipment for our foreign missionaries. For many years they sent bedding and clothing to Sarah Roth in Chicago, to give to destitute people in that city.

The Dorcas Missionary Circle organized in 1955 with Mrs. Eli Sprunger as president. This group of young mothers usually meets in the

evening. Their work supplements that of the older group. One of their special projects is remembering the missionaries and their families with birthday and Christmas greetings. They also give showers to missionaries on furlough on special occasions.

The Girls' Auxiliary organized in 1926. Salome Schug was president. This group of working girls has about 15 members. They also have supplied outgoing missionaries with necessary equipment. For a number of years they have given the Detroit Missionary Workers many articles and funds needed in a city mission.

The Girls Sewing Circle, a group of girls 10 to 18 years of age, met once a month from 1938 to 1963. Betty Schindler started the work in her home, and the girls worked under a sponsor. They made small gifts for Children's Homes, and for missionaries to give as awards.

In 1896 about fourteen families attended the services at the Orphans Home. The larger congregation felt a need for a larger place of worship. This same year the Reformed people were building a new church on Main Street and offered their old building on Jefferson and Water Streets for sale. This was Berne's first schoolhouse built in 1877 by the trustee of Monroe Township. Berne built its own school house in 1888. The Reformed people bought the old schoolhouse, remodeled it and used it for a church until 1896. Rev. J. A. Sprunger and his congregation bought the building for \$700.00. The deed was made on December 12, 1896 to the trustees of The United Missionary Church. The trustees were J. J. Amstutz, J. J. Hirschy and John Lehman.

The church was a small white frame building with a tall steeple. It was heated by a large wood stove in the middle of the room. It was lighted by natural gas. The pews in the balcony of the brick church came from the little white church.

The pews were arranged in two sections with a wide aisle between them. The low pulpit at the west end was flanked on both sides with three pews. Naturally speaking, it was an uncomfortable building with meager facilities. The congregation, however, was happy to have their own place of worship. There are many memories of good revivals, great missionary zeal and blessed fellowship while worshipping in the little white church.

In 1896 Rev. J. A. Sprunger was pastor, Adam Welty, the schoolteacher, was Sunday School superintendent. Mrs. Sprunger, the workers and other members were Sunday School teachers. The Sunday School enrollment was 135.

Early in 1897 the church became adjusted in its new place of worship. Rev. Sprunger continued as pastor, David S. Sprunger was the first Sunday School superintendent; Sarah Stucky, Katie Lehman, Mrs. J. A. Sprunger and J. J. Amstutz were some of the teachers, Lillie Hirschy was organist, J. U. Amstutz was song leader.

Rev. William Egle, who was associated with Rev. Sprunger in the Light and Hope Society, became the first regular pastor of the church in 1898.

For several years there were struggles in the older fellowship of the Defenseless Mennonite Church. The issues over which the battle raged were some of the great truths and doctrines of the Bible; the revivals of these years centered around these truths. Many in the church believed that baptism by immersion was the Bible way of baptism. For several years Rev. J. E. Ramseyer had strong convictions concerning this doctrine. In 1896 he was baptized by immersion while attending a convention at Beulah Park, Cleveland, Ohio. In the summer of 1897 many of the church were baptized by immersion. These people believed they should unite to worship together, and hoped to have a church home eventually.

The next year, 1898, a call went out to many ministers and laymen to convene near Berne, Indiana, for the last three days of August. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the organization of a new church. A suggestion was made that they unite with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, which at that time was undenominational. After much prayer and consultation the group under God's guidance decided to effect a new church organization. Rev. J. E. Ramseyer, Rev. J. A. Sprunger, and Rev. Wm. Egle had a vital part in this decision.

The Missionary Church Association was founded August 29, 1898. The choosing of a name for the new organization was a consideration of great importance. The word 'Church', according to the Greek, means called out ones; the word 'Association' speaks of a oneness and fellowship. 'Missionary' speaks of the spirit of witnessing, of going, and telling. Missionary work seemed to be the reason for which they wanted to be organized. The first officers were Rev. A. E. Funk, president, Rev. J. E. Ramseyer, vice-president, Rev. Wm. Egle, secretary, David Schindler of the Berne community, treasurer.

The West Berne Missionary Church was organized on August 29, 1898, and became the first church of the Missionary Church Association. The Berne church became a member of the Association later in 1898, and was named the Berne Missionary Church.

Rev. Egle's ministry in the Berne church was richly blessed of God. In the second year of his pastorate a great revival continuing through six weeks resulted in more than one hundred decisions for Christ. The church grew in numbers and spiritual life.

Interest in missions increased. Giving for the cause of missions was a vital part for all ages in the church. The children's interest was promoted by the little wooden cylindrical banks with screw tops. The first record of a children's offering is dated Thanksgiving 1901. This

offering was sent to the Armenian orphans. The Berne Church preceded other churches in the Association in children's missionary offerings.



The Little White Church



Rev. William Egle

Rev. Solomon Klopfenstein who was assistant pastor in 1901 and 1902, became regular pastor of the church in 1903 and served until 1904. In 1901 the church started keeping written records of its activities. The records were in German until 1907. The German language was used in the Sunday morning service many years and was still required in part of the service in 1919. The first hymn book was "Gemeinde Gesangbuch." The Sunday School used the song book "Honey Out of the Rock."

In 1903, Rev. J. A. Sprunger transferred his Light and Hope Berne Orphanage to Birmingham, Ohio. This caused the Sunday-School attendance to drop sharply. Approximately 40 orphan children, besides workers in the orphanage, had been attending the Berne Church.

When Mrs. J. E. Ramseyer, wife of the Association president, attended her first convention at Pandora, Ohio, in 1902, she determined that children should receive some inspiration and impressions of a missionary convention. She believed that the spirit of missions must be planted in their hearts; as they grow up they must be prepared to go, to give, and to pray. Through her great effort the first children's meeting was planned. From this first meeting has grown the Sunshine Makers movement of the Missionary Church Association. In the 1903 convention little banks in the shape of small jugs were distributed to fifty children. The shape of the missionary jug has changed several times. Now it is in the form of an acorn. The first breaking of the Missionary jugs was at the 1904 convention at Swanton, Ohio. In 1905 at Pandora, Ohio, the name "Sunshine Makers" was chosen. Requests for jugs came from many churches. The children of the Berne Church received jugs about at this time. For a few years the jug breaking service was at the

annual convention. Soon the jug breaking service was held in the individual churches. A large number of children take part in this important service. In 1918 Elton Roth wrote the words and music of the Sunshine Makers' Song. He dedicated it to Mrs. Ramseyer.

The Sunshine Makers money has gone into practically all mission fields of the church. The funds have supplied the full support of two missionaries, Miss Affie Smoots in Africa, and Miss Mary DeGarmo in China. Now the funds are applied to the support of the children of the missionaries. When the M.C.A. merged with the United Missionary Church in 1969, The Sunshine Makers became Missionary Cadets.

Rev. A. M. Clauser was pastor of the church in 1904 and 1905. He was the first pastor to receive a specified salary. It was \$20.00 a month.

Rev. E. F. Clauser, brother of the former pastor, served the church one year, 1905 to 1906. The young people of the church felt they should have an organization through which they could enjoy Christian fellowship and develop their spiritual lives. Rev. Clauser was interested in their ideas and plans and gave them much encouragement and guidance.

In January, 1905, the pastor cooperated with the pastors of the other churches in Berne, in the first Union Meetings. Rev. S. D. Gordon of Cleveland, Ohio, was the main speaker in the afternoon and evening services. The German speaker, Rev. William Leich, held services in the morning. Mr. C. H. Gabriel was song leader.

In the December-January 1907-1908 meetings, Rev. M. S. Rees was the main speaker. A revival began which lasted two weeks. The local pastors preached in the second week. The spiritual awakening was community-wide; it was compared with the revivals of 1886 and 1894.

The 1912 meetings were canceled because of a smallpox epidemic, and the 1919 services were not held because of influenza.

From 1909 through 1926 English services were held in the Mennonite Church and German services in the Reformed Church. After 1927 all services were held in English at the Mennonite Church. No services were scheduled from 1943 through 1949.

The Berne Ministerial Association made plans for revival meetings in 1950. Evangelist, Rev. Harold Walker, song-leader, George Pike, pianist, Professor Ira Gerig, and children's worker, Louise Kimmel, held meetings at the Mennonite Church from January 1 to 15. The church was filled to capacity, and young people responded to the call of God. In the two weeks 308 decisions were made for Christ.

The Union Meetings have been held annually since 1950. Through the years since 1905, many eminent teachers have preached the great truths of the Bible, including salvation, consecration, Christian service, and prophecy. Among these men were Dr. William Biederwolf, Rev. Paul Rader, Rev. John Paul, Dr. Oswald Smith, Dr. Harold Ockenga, Dr.

Vance Havner, and Dr. Myron Augsburg. Some of the song leaders were D. B. Towner, E. S. Lorenz, Homer Hammontree, I. J. Bittikofer, and Dr. Freeman Burkhalter.

In the years 1906 to 1911, Rev. H. H. Amstutz was pastor of the church. In 1908 the Young People organized under the name Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. They had regular one-half hour services each Sunday evening. Their objective was to promote an earnest Christian life among the members and make them more useful in the service of the Lord. The first president was Caroline I. Hirschy. The organization continued under this name until about 1914, when it was called The Young Peoples Society.

The church became fully organized in 1908 with fifty-eight charter members. The constitution was conformed to the constitution of the Association.

In February, 1908, at a special business meeting the church decided to erect a new building to provide for a growing Sunday School and congregation. More Sunday School classes had been organized. The first class for young married people was among these. The money for the new church was raised by subscription among the members and among neighboring churches and individuals. Many townspeople contributed liberally to the fund. Within a few weeks a sum of \$3045.00 had been raised and the church decided to build. The contract was made with the Artificial Stone Company for \$3998.00. The old building was sold to the highest bidder for \$200.00. It was moved off the church ground, across Jefferson St., then across Water St. into the next block. The building now houses the Flower Bowl.

Construction of the new building progressed rapidly. The corner stone laying service was held on July 5, 1908. In the morning service Rev. H. P. Welton, Detroit, Michigan, spoke on the text "What Mean These Stones."

PROGRAM FOR THE 3:00 P.M. SERVICE

Opening Address—The Pastor

Song

Prayer—Rev. A. M. Clauser

Sermon—Rev. H. P. Weldon, Detroit, Michigan

Offering

Laying of the Corner Stone—Rev. D. Y. Schultz, Fort Wayne

Benediction

CONTENTS OF CORNER STONE LAID IN 1908

1. Bible — First English Bible owned by Rev. H. H. Amstutz, then pastor of the church; he purchased it in 1905.

2. Song book, "Honey Out Of The Rock", first book used in the Sunday School in 1897.
3. A brief history of the church by Rev. H. H. Amstutz, together with a list of charter members of the church.
4. A record book of the Mission Band for the years 1905 to 1908 inclusive.
5. A Sunday School quarterly for the 2nd quarter, 1908.
6. Two copies of the Missionary Worker of July 15, 1908, edited by D. Y. Schultz and containing a report of the corner stone laying on July 5, 1908.
7. One copy of Botschafter des Heils of July 15, 1908, German organ of the Missionary Church Association and edited by Rev. Wm. Egle, giving an account of the Eckstein Legung, July 5, 1908.
8. Two C. E. Topic cards for October to December, 1907, with pictures of the first church on opposite side.
9. A copy of the Berne Witness of July 3, 1908, giving the program for the corner stone laying, July 5, 1908.
10. A copy of the 1908-1909 catalogue of The Fort Wayne Bible Training School, built just three years.
11. A copy of the Tenth Anniversary Souvenir Edition of The Berne Witness published in 1906; it gives a brief history of each church in the town.
12. A copy of The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, July 4, 1908.
13. A copy of the Cincinnati Post, June 25, 1908, with an account of Ex-President Grover Cleveland's death.

The trustees of the church were J. J. Amstutz, David Hirschy, and J. J. Hirschy.



Church Built In 1908



Rev. Hiram H. Amstutz

The new church built at the cost of \$5500.00, was a brick structure with basement and two balconies; it had a seating capacity of about 500. The modest steeple housed the bell from the old white church. This bell has called the people to worship for more than sixty years.

Dedication of the new church was on October 25, 1908. Rev. A. E. Witmer preached the dedicatory sermon. The Association President, Rev. J. E. Ramseyer, was unable to attend the service. Rev. C. W. Oyer, Pandora, Ohio gave the dedicatory prayer.

Other events in Rev. Amstutz's pastorate were the beginning of the Cradle Roll in 1909; Esther Sprunger was superintendent. The first delegates were sent to the annual conference in 1910; the first deacons were elected in 1911. The church started paying rent for the house which the pastor and his family occupied. New song books, "Revival Hymns," were bought for the Sunday School. Both suntime and standard time were used in the town, and the adoption of either one was optional. The church decided to adopt standard time.

The Fort Wayne Bible School had opened in 1904. The young people of the church began to attend and prepare for Christian service. Agnes Sprunger attended the school; she received a call from the Lord to go to Africa. She asked the Christian and Missionary Alliance to accept her; they did so. She had no funds, so her going to the field was delayed. She was the first member of the church to volunteer to go to the foreign field. Norman Hirschy had finished his Bible School work and in 1912 entered Christian work with D. C. Stucky, Detroit, Michigan.

Rev. G. R. Schroeder was called in 1912 to the pastorate of the church. He stayed two years. The church decided to purchase a house for a parsonage to provide better housing for the pastor and his family. In 1913 the Menno Burkhalter house on West Water Street was bought at the price of \$1500. The parsonage was one and one-half blocks west of the church.

The church adopted a plan for raising funds to support our outgoing missionary, Agnes Sprunger. The Mission Band, the Sunday School, and the Christian Endeavor joined in giving their offerings to this fund. In 1914 the church sent \$300.00 to the Association treasurer; this was to be used as part of her support.

The church decided to hold the annual business meeting on the first Monday of the new year.

The pastor's salary was advanced to \$30.00 a month.

Rev. S. J. Grabill became pastor in 1914. His pastorate was blessed with missionary zeal. Three missionaries went to the foreign field. Agnes Sprunger went to Africa in 1916, Mary De Garmo to China in 1919, and Tilman Amstutz to India in 1919. The church also helped to support Chris Eicher, missionary in India. Jesse Amstutz, after completing his

studies at the Bible School, served as assistant pastor to Rev. Wm. Egle at Wauneta, Nebraska. Menno Amstutz entered Christian work as pastor about this time.



Charter member J. U. Amstutz with his Sunday-School class. Melvin Hirschy (deceased), Clarence Hirschy, Tillman Amstutz, Vilas Schindler, Walter Hirschy (deceased), and Oswin Hirschy.

Other changes and progress were made. The church bought a seal and printed stationery to be used in business transactions. In 1918 the constitution of the Association was adopted; however, the church retained the right to elect its officers. A small church library was started in 1917.

Through Mrs. J. E. Ramseyer's interest and enthusiasm, the Gleaners movement was started in the Berne and Pandora churches in 1915. Miss Fannie Schindler organized the Berne Gleaners in her home. The movement spread to other churches. The purpose of the Gleaners was to influence boys and girls in their teens to continue their missionary giving. The money gathered in their five-dollar banks made a sizeable contribution to the missionary enterprise. When the desire arose for the Gleaners to have a song of their own, Hilda Moser (Amstutz) wrote the words for it and Gladys Schindler (Chrisman) wrote the music. It was sung at almost every Gleaner's program.

The annual convention convened in Berne in the summer of 1919. The local church made provisions for serving meals on the ground, and found lodging in the homes of the congregation for the people in attendance.

In the autumn of 1919 Rev. W. J. Amstutz became pastor of the church and served two years. The trustees advanced the pastor's salary to \$75.00 a month.

Rev. Wm. Egle returned to the church in 1921. In the fall of 1923 the church had a good revival; the evangelists were Rev. N. W. Rich and W. R. Hallman. In 1924 the church again was host to the Annual Convention.

In 1925 the church considered remodeling the parsonage. Later, building on the church lot was proposed. This plan, however, was rejected. An appointed committee decided to sell the parsonage on Water Street, and buy a larger and better house. The parsonage was sold for \$2550.00 and a larger one, a brick structure, the former David Luginbill house on Sprunger and Cleveland Street was bought for \$5500.00.

While associated with Rev. J. A. Sprunger in the Light and Hope Publishing House, Rev. Egly began the publishing of the German periodical "Der Botschafter des Heils in Christo." The paper gave emphasis to the full truths of the Gospel. In 1903 the General Conference recognized and approved it as the official organ of the Association. While serving as pastor, Rev. Egle was still editing the paper until 1927; the growing lack of appeal of the German language made it unprofitable. The Missionary Worker was first published in 1904. It reached a larger constituency than the German paper, and had a special appeal to the young people. It became the official journal of the M.C.A. The name was changed to Emphasis (on faith and living) in 1967. It is now the official publication of the Missionary Church.

Two members of the church went to the foreign mission fields. Fanny Schindler went to Africa in 1924, Elda Amstutz to India in 1927. Sylvia and Leona Amstutz were doing home missionary work in Council Bluffs, Iowa, for a number of years.

In 1925 the church first took part in the Summer Bible School of the Berne Community. The purpose of the school was expressed in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." All the churches provided teachers for the school, which lasted five weeks. At one time nearly 800 children attended.

Rev. Henry E. Tropf was pastor of the church five years, 1930-1935. His ministry was characterized by devotion to the deep truths of God's Word.

Rev. C. H. Wiederkehr's pastorate was from 1936 to 1948. At the beginning of their ministry, Rev. and Mrs. Wiederkehr invited the

children of the church to come to a children's meeting about one-half hour before the evening service. The children were thrilled and responded heartily. The group increased in numbers approaching one hundred. Mrs. Wiederkehr conducted the meeting, which Rev. Wiederkehr named "Children's Happy Hour." The children learned to listen carefully, they learned to pray and to give. Their pennies soon amounted to a good sum. It was through Mrs. Wiederkehr's vision, effort, and influence that the children's offering in the entire Missionary Church is given for the support of the children of the foreign missionaries.

The Children's Happy Hour has been continued under efficient leadership. Mrs. J. J. Klopfenstein, affectionately called "Aunt Mary", and her assistants did much to make the program attractive to children. There was always a Bible story, singing, prayer-time, and testimonies. Mr. and Mrs. Keith Amstutz and Mrs. Leroy Sprunger have been recent leaders. The children are now called Missionary Cadets.

In 1937 the church's name was changed to "The First Missionary Church."



Church with North Wing

In 1942 the church building was enlarged by an addition of 20 feet to the auditorium, along the north side. This provided for a larger platform for the pulpit, a place for the choir, and increased seating space. The basement of the addition had a room 20 by 48 feet. A 12 by 20 feet extended addition on the northwest corner provided a west entrance, basement and balcony stairways, clothes racks and library space. The second floor room was a class room; the basement room was used by the beginner's department.

The increased seating capacity in balcony and auditorium was about 100; in three class rooms it was about 75.

The approximate building cost was \$11,000.00.

In 1943 Rev. Wiederkehr began to issue the church bulletin from his office. It appeared in typed form with the picture of the church on the front page.

The weekly chapel exercises in the Berne-French High School were planned as a part of the school program. The local ministers spoke at these exercises. Later the rural high schools also provided for weekly chapel exercises. The Berne and rural pastors spoke at their convocations.

In Rev. Wiederkehr's pastorate a number of families of the Amish Christian Church were looking for a new church home. Some of them started attending services at the First Missionary Church. They received spiritual guidance and a friendly welcome from the church people. Rev. Wiederkehr gave them the desired counsel and guidance. About eight families attended the church services. Many of these decided to become members of the church. Among the family names were these: Inniger, Steury, Schwartz, Habegger, and Nussbaum.

In the early years of the Church the pastors conducted their own revivals. When the membership increased the people were better able to have an evangelist come to the church for revival meetings.

The church has had many good revivals. One or more revivals were now held annually. More emphasis was being placed on youth revivals. Many outstanding Bible teachers and evangelists have come to the church.

The evangelists in revival meetings in Rev. Wiederkehr's pastorate were: 1936 Rev. Dale Mitchell; 1937 Rev. Joshua Stauffer; 1938 Rev. Harold Wiswell; 1939 Rev. Edison Habegger; 1940 Rev. Q. J. Everest and Rev. Menno N. Amstutz; 1941 Dr. C. I. Armstrong; 1942 Rev. Kenneth Geiger and Rev. Edison Habegger; 1943 Rev. Anna Spellman, and Rev. Q. J. Everest; 1944 Rev. T. C. Henderson; 1945 Rev. George Hewitt; 1946 Dr. Jared F. Gerig; 1947 Rev. Forest Kuhn; 1948 Rev. Robert Strubhar.

Missionaries going to the foreign field were 1939, Luella Burley, India; 1940, Waldo and Cecil Schindler, Africa.

The Youth organizations date back to 1908, when the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was organized. In 1915, the teen age group, the Gleaners organization was started. The older group shortened its name to Young People's Society at this time, and continued with this name until 1945. In the late twenties and early thirties a more aggressive young people's program began to develop. There was a need for a broader program to embrace the total development of youth under active and well-organized leadership. In 1945, the name, Missionary Youth Fellowship, was adopted as the official name of the young people's organization throughout the Association. A new and broader platform of objectives was incorporated in new by-laws ap-

proved by the same conference. These include the promotion and development of the spirituality of the young people, edification through Scriptural knowledge, enlistment in evangelistic and missionary effort at home and abroad through existing organizations and the promotion of church loyalty and fellowship among the young people.

All districts are completely organized and carry on their programs under the supervision of the General Youth Director of the Missionary Church.

Rallies, youth camps, youth revivals, and the promotion of various types of projects have combined to enlarge and strengthen the program.

The local M.Y.F. organization is carrying this program under capable leadership.

The youth leaders in the church since 1945 are Kathleen Inniger, Mildred Hirschy, Gareth Wiederkehr, Merlin Inniger, Valier Amstutz, Christene Sprunger, George Hewitt, John Zuercher and LeRoy Sprunger. Five of these leaders are in active Christian work, four of them in foreign missionary work.

Rev. J. Pritchard Amstutz was pastor from 1948 to 1952. He initiated a new idea in church publications. "Missionary Echoes" official weekly news bulletin of The First Missionary Church was mailed to all members and friends of the church for ten months in 1951. About 225 copies were printed.

The regular church bulletin was printed by the Economy Printing Concern through the courtesy of C. H. Muselman and daughter, Pauline.

The missionaries who went to the foreign field were: 1949, Truman and Eileen Gottschalk, Ecuador, South America, and in 1950, Pauline Muselman; in 1950, Kathleen Inniger went to Japan.

The Men's Fellowship was organized in 1949. Don Grove was elected president by the small group of 13 men. The men have monthly meetings with an attendance of 30 to 40. They have guest groups occasionally, and also go to other churches as guests. They usually have a special speaker. Some of the men in this group, called "Pals," are contributing to a special fund which is used to pay young pastors in new churches which are unable to support them. This money goes to the Missionary Church Treasury, which sends the money where most needed. The Men's Fellowship is now called M M I, Missionary Men International.

Evangelists who held revivals in the church were: 1948, Rev. Blanchard Amstutz; 1949, Dr. John H. Paul, and Rev. Harold Walker in youth revival; 1950, Rev. A. F. Albro and Rev. "Jimmie" Gibson; 1951, Rev. Garret H. Phillips and Gerald Gerig in youth revival; 1952, Rev. Charles McHatten and Rev. Claude Richards in youth revival.

Rev. J. J. Klopfenstein came in 1952, and it was during his pastorate

that the church on U S 27 South was built. He was keenly interested in the building program, but was even more concerned with the spiritual growth of the church.

In 1953 the by-laws of the church were amended. In 1956 they were made to conform with the Association constitution, which was amended by the Conference. In 1957 the new Association by-laws were accepted with regard to the voting age of members, selection of pastor, and membership of the church. The local by-laws were further amended to read: "Our local church fiscal year shall end on September 30 and open on October 1.

In 1956 the Reusser Memorial Home in Berne, Indiana, became a home for missionaries on furlough. In 1961 a new duplex was added to the home, thus making living quarters for four families. Some of the families living there worship at the First Missionary Church. This enriches the fellowship of the church.

Young people who entered Christian work are: 1952, Robert and Lorene Schrock, pastor, Pleasant Mills Baptist Church; 1952, Brice Fennig, pastor of Brethren Church, Howe, Ind.; 1953, Gareth and Treva Wiederkehr, missionaries, Sierra Leone, West Africa; 1954, Paul Amstutz, pastor of two Methodist churches, New Haven, Michigan; 1954, Roger Amstutz, pastor of Christian Church, Murray, Ind.; 1954, Merlin Inniger, missionary in Pakistan; 1956, Walter and Esther Bailey, pastor, Wauneta, Nebraska Missionary Church; 1957, John and Bernadine Zurcher, pastor Union Chapel, Bryant, Ind., and 1960, missionaries in Haiti; 1957, Martel and Anna Fennig, missionaries, Kenya Colony, East Africa; 1958, Tom Zehr, assistant pastor First Missionary Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.; 1958, Edward Amstutz, director Christian Education, Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida; 1959, Ernest Steury, missionary doctor, Kenya Colony, East Africa; 1960, Millard and Janean Moser, missionaries, Hong Kong.

The evangelists of this period were: 1953, Rev. Arthur Albro and Rev. George Hewitt; 1954, Rev. Edison Habegger; 1955, Rev. Robert Strubhar and Rev. Don Rohr, youth revival; 1956, Rev. Jared F. Gerig and Rev. C. W. Slemming; 1957, Rev. John Nussbaum and Rev. Paul E. Grabill in youth revival; 1958, Rev. W. O. Klopfenstein and Rev. Vernon Petersen in youth revival; 1959, Rev. Carl Bihl.

In 1952 the envelope system of giving was introduced. In 1953 a Budget and Finance Committee was appointed.

In 1936 the sum of \$1049.37 was given for repairing and redecorating the church. After the work was paid, \$216.00 remained in the treasury. This fund was named Building Fund. To increase the fund, ten per cent of the money in the various treasuries, except the foreign mission's and trustee's treasuries, was added to it. In 1942 the church decided that all funds received in excess of expenses and of missionary

pledges (plus \$200.00) be allotted to the Building Fund. The ten per cent payment to the fund was discontinued in 1945.

In 1946 a Building Fund Committee was appointed. All the treasuries except the foreign missions treasury were asked to make pledges to the fund. In 1948 and 1949 special offerings were received on a designated Sunday in each quarter of the year. The church board appointed a committee to present a plan to promote the building program.

In 1953 the Sunday-School superintendent, the trustees, and three other men served on the Building Fund Committee. In 1954 the group was named the Planning and Survey Committee. There were seven members besides the pastor, Sunday-School superintendent, and the Church Council. They studied the possibilities of enlarging the church building and counseled with architect Leroy Bradley of Ft. Wayne. He informed them that building an addition to the church was not advisable.

At the 1955 annual business meeting, the church approved the recommendation of the Planning and Survey Committee for a new site and a new church. The same year the church voted to purchase the site on U S Highway 27 South. The trustees bought a plot of ground between Stucky and Parkway Streets. It contained almost 6 acres and the cost was \$1,000.00 per acre.

The Building Fund was growing steadily and was increased by the balance of the Anna R. Sprunger estate, which amounted to \$3,195.16. The 1956 balance in the church treasury was transferred to the Building Fund. This was done again in the church years 1957, 1957-58, 1958-59, 1959-60. Seven more men were added to the Planning and Survey Committee.

At the semi-annual business meeting of 1956, the church gave the Planning and Survey Committee the authority to engage a licensed architect to make tentative plans for a new church building; the plans would be submitted to the church for approval.

Plans submitted on August 21, 1957, did not carry sufficient votes for adoption.

The church voted to continue the Building Fund offerings, and five more men were added to the Planning and Survey Committee. This committee now included the following men: Clyde Sprunger, Carl Amstutz, Leslie Sprunger, Albert Amstutz, Clifton Amstutz, Homer Amstutz, Oswin Amstutz, Virgil Amstutz, Jay Conrad, Menno S. Hirschy, Homer Inniger, Rev. J. J. Klopfenstein, Harold Langham, Cyrus Lehman, Carl H. Muselman, Lorris Phillips, Vilas Schindler, Jerry Sprunger, Laverne Sprunger, Ornelle Sprunger, Frank Steury, Reuben Steury, John Zehr, Preston Zehr, Leroy Sprunger, and Melvin Sprunger.

Envelopes were used for Building Fund Offerings, and many members made substantial pledges. The Sunday-School decided to take

a Building Fund offering on the last Sunday of each month. The Broadway Plan for Church Finance was explained, and the church voted to adopt the plan. The church also voted to build on the site purchased in 1955.

In a special business meeting held on August 20, 1958, a new plan was presented and explained to the church. The architect, Orus Eash, helped in presenting the plan. The Building Fund amounted to \$97,362.17. The church accepted the plan and voted to begin construction as soon as possible.

The Planning and Survey Committee now became the Master Steering Committee, and a Master Building Committee was appointed. The men appointed were Leslie Sprunger, Carl W. Amstutz, Lorris Phillips, Clyde Sprunger and Laverne Sprunger.

Bids received were opened on April 21, 1959 and contracts were let on April 22 to the following: General Contractor, Merlin W. Habegger; Electrical and Resistance Heating, Reynolds Electric; Plumbing, Ventilation and Cooling, Liechty Brothers.

Orus Eash, architect, gave estimates received on well and pump, church pews, Sunday-School furniture, and kitchen equipment. Everything was in readiness to begin construction.

The Ground-Breaking Service was held on April 26, 1959, at the close of the morning service. The congregation went to the new church site and observed the ceremony on the exact spot where the church was to stand. The Men's Chorus sang and ground was broken by Rev. Klopfenstein, representative members of the Church Board and of the Building Committee, the Youth leader, the architect, and the Sunday-School children, under the direction of Mrs. J. J. Klopfenstein. Rev. Truman Gottschalk gave the benediction.

In the summer of 1959 the trustees of the church applied for a Charter of Incorporation in the State of Indiana. This charter enabled the church to authorize the selling of bonds under the Broadway Plan. The selling of bonds enabled the church to get funds needed for the building program. The Church Finance Committee included Clifton Amstutz, Jay Conrad, Menno Hirschy, Vilas Schindler, Jerry Sprunger and Carl H. Muselman. These men administered the sale of bonds, which totaled \$125,000.00.

The building operation proceeded according to plans and schedule. The well for the heat pump reached a depth of 185 feet. After much preliminary work, the steel beams for the sanctuary were put in place. The Building Committee spent much time at the site.

Brick for the building came in three shipments. The men of the church unloaded the bricks and brought them to the building site.

The Corner Stone Laying took place on May 1, 1960. The first part of the service was held at the church on Water Street. The Men's Chorus

sang, then Rev. J. J. Klopfenstein, pastor, and Rev. Tillman Habegger, Association president, and Rev. C. I. Birkey, Foreign Secretary, gave short messages. The congregation then proceeded to the new site, where the Men's Chorus sang again, Menno Hirschy offered prayer, and the deacons and trustees, assisted by the architect and builder, placed the corner stone. The congregation sang, and prayer was offered by Rev. Birkey and Rev. Habegger.



The Deacons assist in laying the Corner Stone
Menno S. Hirschy, Oswin Amstutz, and Homer Inniger.

Corner Stone Contents in 1960

With items of the corner stone laid in 1908, these following things were placed in the box for the Corner Stone Laying of the new First Missionary Church of Berne, May 1, 1960.

1. A history of the church, brought up to date. Written by Miss Caroline I. Hirschy.
2. Pictures of the old White Church purchased in 1896, the brick church built in 1908, and the new church built in 1960.
3. Annual Church Reports for 1958 and 1959. These contain the present membership list, officers of all departments of the church and Sunday School, the new building Planning Committee, the Building Committee, a report of church finances, etc.
4. A recent copy of the Missionary Church Association constitution and a copy of our by-laws.
5. A recent copy of the Missionary Worker.

6. A Sunshine Makers acorn jug with 1960 coins in it, and a note inserted telling of our children's work.
7. The names of our new building contractors.
8. A set of the leaflets describing the progress of the building operations.
9. A church bulletin of this date.
10. A copy of the Berne Witness of April 29, 1960 with a detailed announcement of the corner stone laying.

The rectangular church facing the east stands in the middle of a five-acre plot about 300 feet from the highway. Two 60' X 200' black-topped parking lots are on the east part of the plot. Between these plots is a lawn area about 100' X 200'. Other lawn areas are along the north, south, and west sides of the building.

An open steel tower in front of the church lifts a large illuminated steel cross to a height of 45 feet.

The main part of the church building, the sanctuary, is in the form of a rectangular solid. It is flanked on the north and south sides by educational units; a smaller unit is on the west side. The dimensions of the sanctuary are 46 by 97 feet; the dimensions of the entire building are 103'5" by 141'3".

Ten large steel beams form the bones of the sanctuary. They rise 22 feet above the floor and support the 4-inch solid cedar decking. Eleven-foot brick-block-brick walls are on the south, west, and north sides. The upper part of the walls are made of white translucent kalwall panels. They extend down from the ceiling to the brick walls on the south, west and north sides. On the east side, the kalwall panels extend down from the ceiling 20 feet to a railing two feet from the floor.

The estimated seating capacity is 520 in the sanctuary, 140 in the balcony, 60 in the choir loft, and 80 in the overflow space of the foyer, or a total of 800.

The north side educational units are 18 by 140 feet and have folding doors. They provide Sunday-School facilities for the Youth Department and some adult classes. They are also used for Youth Fellowship services and as a fellowship hall for weddings and funerals. There is a small kitchen at the west end.

The south side educational units are 18 by 140 feet and are equipped with folding doors to provide room for the children's department of the Sunday-School, Children's Church, Missionary Cadets, and children's Wednesday evening meetings.

The 12 by 48 feet west side includes the pastor's study and three Sunday-School rooms. At the east end of the building are restrooms, a nursery, and a small office for the Sunday-School superintendent.

The temperature of the building is regulated by the Prop-R-Temp

Typhoon Heat Pump. This pump heats in the winter, cools in the summer, and air-conditions at all times.

The acoustics of the church include speakers in the sanctuary, foyer, nursery, and in the north unit. Hearing aids are in several locations. The control booth is in the southeast corner of the sanctuary.

In the summer of 1960 two more committees were named. The Landscaping Committee included George Hewitt, Harold Langham, Ernest Amstutz, Ted Hirschy, Don Grove, Tillman Moser, Tillman Sprunger, Robert Amstutz, Arthur Fox, Franklin Steury, Lester Habegger, and Percy Gould. Between 40 and 50 men worked with this committee to prepare the lawn areas. The Parking Lot Marking Committee included Walter Schindler, James De Armond, Amos E. Moser, Delmar Neuenschwander, and Dee Jones.

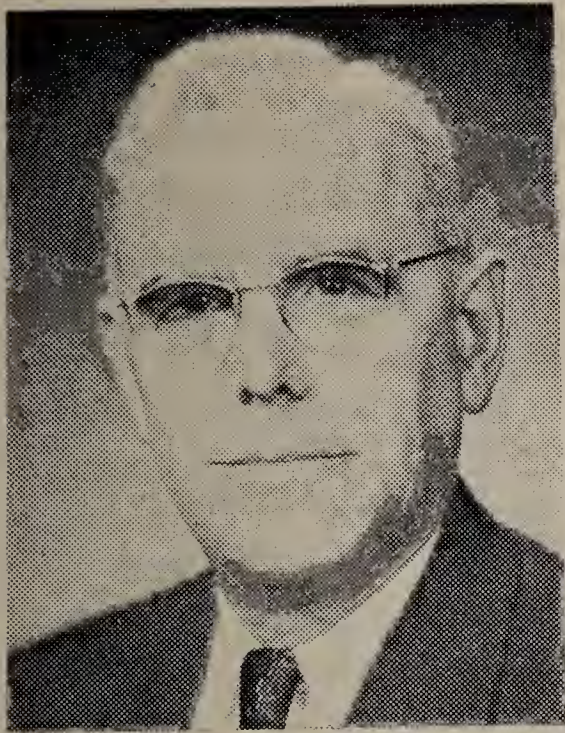
Men and women helped in the cleaning of the new church. Windows were washed and general cleaning of floors, lights, and furniture was completed.

The beginning of the building of the church was a matter of faith coupled with much planning. Many people gave of their time, their money, and their talents. The guidance of God was very evident. The work was completed in August, 1960.

The first service at the new church was on Sunday, August 21. At the close of the service, the pastor asked the church board and representatives of the various organizations to kneel at the altar, rededicating themselves to the service of God. The entire congregation was asked to join in this prayer.



Church built in 1960



Rev. J. J. Klopfenstein

The congregation quickly adjusted to its new place of worship. The Sunday-School enrollment was nearly 400; more than 100 were children. There was a staff of 16 teachers and 21 assistants. The church had a membership of 310.

Dedication services for the new church were held on October 2, 1960. There were 454 in Sunday-School, 480 in morning worship, 850 in the dedication service, and 355 in the evening service. Rev. C. H. Wiederkehr and Rev. H. E. Tropf, former pastors, spoke in the morning and evening services. Former members and friends came from a distance. God's blessing was on all the services.

DEDICATION SERVICE

OCTOBER 2, 1960, 2:00 P.M.

Organ Prelude	GLADYS CHRISMAN
Hymn	CLYDE H. SPRUNGER, Director
"Great Is Thy Faithfulness"	
Scripture	REV. G. ROBERT MAGARY
	Pastor, West Missionary Church
Prayer	REV. SAMUEL J. GRABILL
	Pastor here 1913-1919
Men's Chorus	C. Kreutzer
"Praise To The Lord Today"	
Greetings	REV. GORDON NEUENSCHWANDER
	President, Berne Community Ministerial Association
Greetings	REV. CORNELIUS VLOT
	Vice-President, Missionary Church Association
Solo "Bless This Church"	MRS. HOWARD LUGINBILL
Announcements	
Offering	
Church Choir	Will James
"Sing And Rejoice"	
Dedicatory Sermon, "The Stewardship of Grace"	
	REV. TILLMAN HABEGGER
	President, Missionary Church Association

Act of Dedication	
Prayer of Dedication	REV. CLAYTON D. STEINER
	Superintendent, Central District of M.C.A.
Hymn	
	"To God Be The Glory"
Benediction	MENNO S. HIRSCHY
	Assistant Chairman of the congregation

The total cost of the church was \$272,273.19. It was completely paid in 1968.

An outdoor sign for the church was erected in 1961.

Family Hour for adults was begun in 1960. John Mason was president. Family Hour precedes the Sunday evening worship service and meets at the same time as the M.Y.F. and the Missionary Cadets.

In 1961 the old church building on Water Street was sold to the Grace Bible Church for \$5300.00.

Rev. C. H. Wiederkehr returned as pastor in 1961 and continued until 1964. He did much to unify and strengthen the church. In 1962 the kitchen was needed for an extra Sunday School classroom.

In 1964 Kae Linnet Sprunger left for missionary work in Sierra Leone.

Evangelists were Rev. William Weston in 1962; Rev. Jimmie Gibson in 1963; Rev. Jay Kessler in a youth revival with Tom Zehr, chorister; and Rev. Wesley Gerig in 1963.

Rev. Gerald I. Gerig became pastor in 1964 and served until 1971. The church grew and prospered during this time.

The Mid-Week Messenger made its appearance on September 16, 1964. It is mailed weekly to every home in the church.

The radio broadcast of the Sunday evening service began on May 7, 1967, over Decatur WADM-AM-FM. The cost is \$205.24 per month.

The church by-laws were changed by vote in 1965 and again in 1970.

A Christian Education Committee was appointed in 1966 to coordinate and direct the teaching ministry of the church.

Mrs. Leroy Sprunger had charge of the Sunday evening Children's Happy Hour from 1964 to 1966. Mr. and Mrs. Keith Amstutz directed the work from 1966 to 1968. In 1968 Mrs. Sprunger again took charge of the children, now called Missionary Cadets.

Two different building committees made careful plans for expansion of the church facilities. Both plans were defeated, one in 1966 and one in 1970.

Rev. Gareth Wiederkehr became Minister of Visitation in 1968. Junior Church was begun on October 20, 1968, with Rev. and Mrs. Wiederkehr in charge of the children.

The Sunday School attendance grew. Air-conditioners were installed in the classrooms in 1969. In 1970 folding doors were purchased to provide for four more classes. Folding doors were also installed in the balcony.

Don Gerig became Music Director in 1968. The Radio Ensemble was organized and a record was made of their music. The Missionaires Quartet was also very active during this time. In 1970 Darrell Gerig became Music Director. More music groups were organized.

In 1968 a lot at 706 Sherwayne Drive was purchased for a parsonage. A friend paid a substantial part of this purchase. The parsonage was built in 1968 and dedicated in 1969. It is electrically heated and air-conditioned. The cost was approximately \$35,270.00. Money used for this project was given by Miss Martha Schug.

In 1972 the parsonage at 379 N. Sprunger Street was sold for \$18,500.00.

In 1969 the church began its own Vacation Bible School. Rev. and Mrs. Gareth Wiederkehr were in charge of the school for four years.

In 1969 the church voted to purchase a pipe organ for the sanctuary.

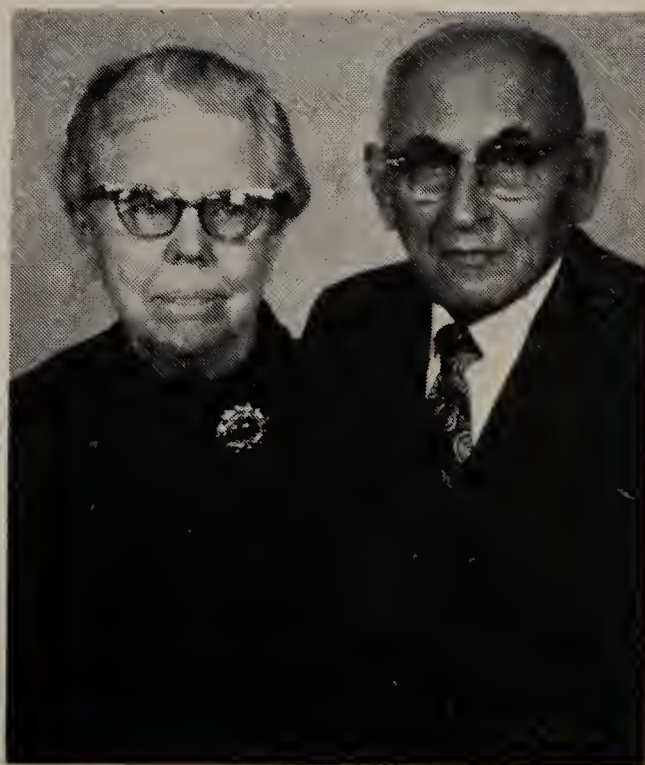
In 1969 the Missionary Church Association and the United Missionary Church merged to become the Missionary Church, of approximately 35,000 members throughout the world. In 1970 the Berne church became a member of the National Association of Evangelical Churches.

The youth work flourished under the capable leadership of Leroy Sprunger, Youth Director, and his assistants.

In 1970 David and Joleen Biberstein left for missionary work in Jamaica.



Rev. & Mrs. C. Edwin Prosser



Rev. & Mrs. C. H. Wiederkehr

Those who ministered in special meetings were Rev. Forest Weddle, with Mrs. C. H. Wiederkehr holding children's meetings, in 1965; Rev. William Pauley in a youth revival in 1965; Rev. C. A. Epperson with West Berne Church in 1966; Rev. Ralph Ogden and Rev. Robert Fansler in 1967; Rev. William Weston and Rev. Forest Weddle in 1968; Dr. F. L. Stephenson in 1968 and 1969; Rev. Eddie Jones in 1969; Rev. Gordon Bacon and Rev. John Nussbaum in 1970.

In 1971 Rev. C. Edwin Prosser of Ontario, Canada, became pastor. He was a member of the United Missionary Church which merged with the Missionary Church Association. He is concerned for each one of his congregation and is dedicated to God.



A Schantz pipe organ was installed in the sanctuary in December, 1971. It was designed by Arthur C. Strahle, District Manager of Schantz Organ-Builders, and was custom-built for the First Missionary Church.

The organ consists of two manual and pedal divisions. There are 18 ranks of pipes and a total of 1124 pipes. The chimes are composed of 25 bells. Much of the organ is exposed.

It was dedicated on January 16, 1972, to the glory of God. Mr. Merlin Lehman, professor at Valparaiso University, played the organ for the dedication service.

The cost of the instrument was \$45,642.13. It was completely paid in 1972. The organ committee included Clyde Sprunger, Laverne Sprunger and Don Gerig.

In 1972 Rev. and Mrs. Gareth Wiederkehr resumed missionary

work in Sierra Leone, and Rev. and Mrs. Stanley Inniger became missionaries to the Dominican Republic. Rev. C. H. Wiederkehr became Minister of Visitation for the Berne church.

The present (1973) enrollment of the Sunday-School is 577. The Sunday-School is staffed by general superintendent James Beitler, 8 departmental superintendents with 8 assistants, 23 teachers, and 32 assistant teachers. Enrolled are 113 children from Cradle Roll through primary grades, 45 Juniors, and 90 young people of Junior high and high school age. There are 329 adults.

Children's Church is in charge of Mrs. C. H. Wiederkehr, assisted by Rev. Wiederkehr and Mrs. Keith Amstutz, pianist. Children from age four through grade four attend the service. They sing, read Scripture, offer prayer, provide special music, and receive the offering. There is a message for children and a children's bulletin. The average attendance is 72.

Mrs. Ernest Amstutz directs a Nursery Church for children below four years of age.

A staffed nursery is provided for the youngest children.

The Missionary Cadets meet on Sunday evening at 6:45 under the direction of Mrs. Leroy Sprunger and 12 assistants. From 60 to 80 children meet in three groups: preschool and grade one; grades 2 and 3; and grades 4, 5 and 6. Their missionary goal for 1973 is \$2300.00.



Nine adults provide for Pre-School, Primary, and Junior Classes on Wednesday evening. The Primary and Junior choirs also meet at this time.

Since 1957 Leroy Sprunger has been Youth Director. There are many activities for the young people. Two MYF groups meet on Sunday evenings at 6:45. The Junior High attendance is from 25 to 30, and the Senior High and College attendance is from 50 to 55. There are 28 young people involved in Bible Quiz teams with five leaders. There is a Girl's Chorus, an MYF Ensemble, and an MYF Chorale. There are Wednesday evening classes geared to the interests of youth.

In 1950 the MYF assumed the support of Kathleen Inniger Jacobsen. In 1972 the church assumed her support, and the MYF now supports Rev. and Mrs. Stanley Inniger. The young people also contribute to Wheels for Missions, a project of MYF International to buy vehicles for missionaries.

The young people have a basket-ball team and volley-ball teams. There are Singspirations and other social activities. Four adult couples are sponsors and are assisted by Youth Department Sunday-School teachers and their wives.

The Music Director is Darrell Gerig. He directs the Church Choir, the Radio Ensemble, MYF Ensemble, MYF Chorale, and Sixteen Singing Men. Mrs. Arthur Lipina has charge of the Primary Choir, Terry Steury directs the Junior Choir, and Jama Sprunger has charge of the Girl's Chorus. There are quartets, trios, instrumentalists, and vocal soloists. Seven organists and eight pianists assist in the music program.

Mrs. C. H. Wiederkehr is in charge of the Vacation Bible School for 1973, with Miss Jeanette Sprunger assisting her. The school will be in session for two weeks.

Evangelists who have ministered during Rev. Prosser's pastorate are Rev. Clarence Hunking in 1971, and Rev. Don Engram and the Campbell-Reese Evangelistic Party in 1972.

Shut-ins can listen to the church services by means of shut-in lines, which connect approximately 20 homes to the church.

Eleven missionaries are supported by the church. They are Rev. and Mrs. David Biberstein, Rev. and Mrs. Stanley Inniger, Mrs. Morris Jacobsen, Miss Pauline Muselman, Miss Kae Linnet Sprunger, Rev. and Mrs. Gareth Wiederkehr, and Rev. and Mrs. John Zurcher.

Records of the First Missionary Church furnish some interesting statistics. In the depression years (1929 to 1934) the average total amount given yearly was \$5020.31. The total amount given in 1971-1972 was \$154,695.78. More than \$65,000 was given for missions. The church budget for 1972-1973 is \$44,540.00. The missionary goal is \$70,000.00. The total amount given for missions since the church was dedicated is \$487,472.17.

The average Sunday School attendance for 1971-1972 was 517. The church membership in 1972 was 465. Since 1960 the Sunday School attendance increased 42.71% . Church membership increased exactly 50% .

Some members have several offices in the church, but 211 people have at least one responsibility in the work of the church. Of the people listed in the church directory of 1971-1972, 157 are direct descendants or married to direct descendants of the charter members.

The Omen Amstutz funeral was the first one in the present church. Since that time there have been 71 deaths.

In September, 1972, the church had 465 members. The covenant of membership includes:

1. The obligation to be loyal to the church and its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrine.
2. The obligation to contribute regularly to the support of the church and its world-wide ministries.
3. The obligation to maintain private devotions and practice faithful Christian living.
4. The obligation to regard other members with brotherly love, Christian sympathy, and tolerance.
5. The obligation to be faithful in witnessing for Christ so that lost souls may be won to Him.

There is a growing need for expansion of church facilities. In 1972 the church bought a plot of 1.07 acres of land adjoining the west parking lot. The cost was \$6,682.50.

A new Building Committee has been appointed and is making careful plans for expansion. This committee includes the Church Board, trustees Valier Amstutz and Loren Liechty, and members Kedwin Graber, Merlin Habegger, Tony Yoder, and John Zehr.

As the church grows in numbers, may its members grow in grace, wisdom, and in loving concern for those without Christ, at home and abroad.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” 1 Cor. 15:58.

CHURCH OFFICERS

Chairman of the Board
Assistant Chairman

Rev. C. Edwin Prosser
Ornelle Sprunger

CHURCH BOARD

Pastor
Minister of Visitation
Deacon
Deacon
Deacon
Secretary
Sunday School Superintendent
Chairman of Trustees
Treasurer of Missions
Church Treasurer

Rev. C. Edwin Prosser
Rev. C. H. Wiederkehr
Leroy Sprunger
Homer Inniger
Ornelle Sprunger
Jerry Sprunger
James Beitler
Laverne Sprunger
Judson Sprunger
Jay Conrad

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

Sunday School
Missionary Youth Fellowship
 Senior High
 Junior High
Children's Work
Children's Church
Missionary Cadets
Music Director

James Beitler, Supt.
Leroy Sprunger, Youth Director
Ann Steury, President
Kurt Keller, President

Mrs. C. H. Wiederkehr
Mrs. Leroy Sprunger
Darrell Gerig
Church Choir, Radio Ensemble,
MYF Chorale, MYF Ensemble,
16 Singing Men.

Girl's Chorus
Junior Choir
Primary Choir
Missionary Men International
Ladies Aid
Dorcas Missionary Circle
Missionary Auxiliary
Mission Band
Christian Family Hour

Jama Sprunger, Director
Terry Steury, Director
Mrs. Arthur Lipina, Director
Harold Langham, President
Mrs. Elmer Liechty, President
Mrs. Keith Minger, President
Miss Ida Hirschy, President
Larry Amstutz, President
Loren Liechty, President

CHARTER MEMBERS

At Organization of Church Body, 1908

Amos Amstutz	Mrs. Lena Hirschy
Mrs. Amos Amstutz	Sarah Hirschy
J. J. Amstutz	Philip Huser
Mrs. J. J. Amstutz	Mrs. Philip Huser
Menno Amstutz	Mrs. Anna Liechty
J. U. Amstutz	Mrs. Peter Liechty
Mrs. J. U. Amstutz	Jacob Neuenschwander
* Jesse Amstutz	William Reusser
Sylvia Amstutz	Ada Reusser
Chris Bruchy	Emma Reusser
Mrs. Chris Bruchy	Harry Runyon
Zilla Gilliom	Mrs. Harry Runyon
Christian Hirschy	* Flora Sauder
Mrs. Christian Hirschy	Amos Schindler
David Hirschy	Mrs. Amos Schindler
Mrs. David Hirschy	Sam Schindler
Rufus Hirschy	Mrs. Sam Schindler
Menno Hirschy	Erna Schindler
Emma Hirschy	Agnes Sprunger
Eli Hirschy	* Anna Sprunger
Mrs. Eli Hirschy	* Esther Sprunger
Mathilda Hirschy	Martha Sprunger
Norman Hirschy	John Stauffer
J. J. Hirschy	George Stauffer
Mrs. J. J. Hirschy	Jacob Stucky
Albert Hirschy	Joseph Stucky
* Caroline Hirschy	Mrs. Joseph Stucky
Lillie Hirschy Fox	Henry Winteregg
	Mrs. Henry Winteregg
	Mrs. William Wittwer
* Living member	

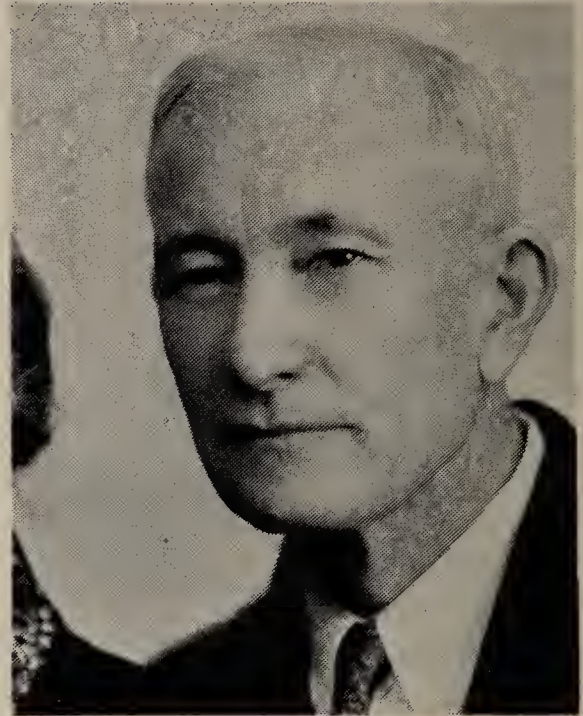
Sources of Information

History Missionary Church, Annual Reports of the Church, Church Records, Church Bulletins and Data, Former Pastors' files, Berne Witness files, Pastor's files, Personal files, Personal Interviews, and Letters.

Pastors of the First Missionary Church



Rev. William Egle
1898-1903; 1921-1930



Rev. Solomon Klopfenstein
1903-1904



Rev. Alfred M. Clauser
1904-1905



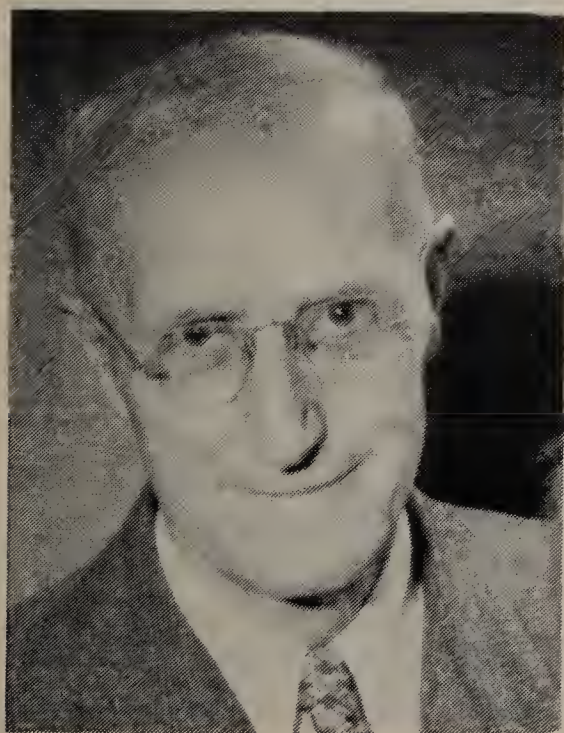
Rev. Edgar F. Clauser
1905-1906



Rev. Hiram H. Amstutz
1906-1911



Rev. George P. Schroeder
1912-1913



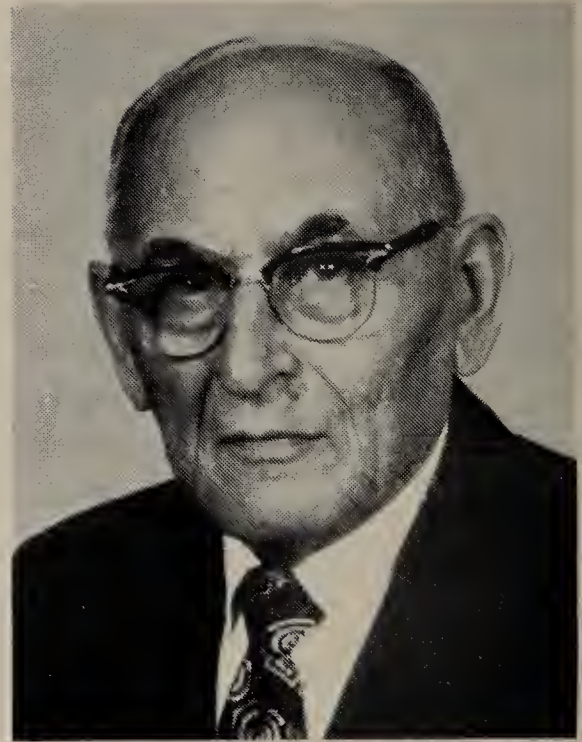
Rev. Samuel J. Grabill
1913-1919



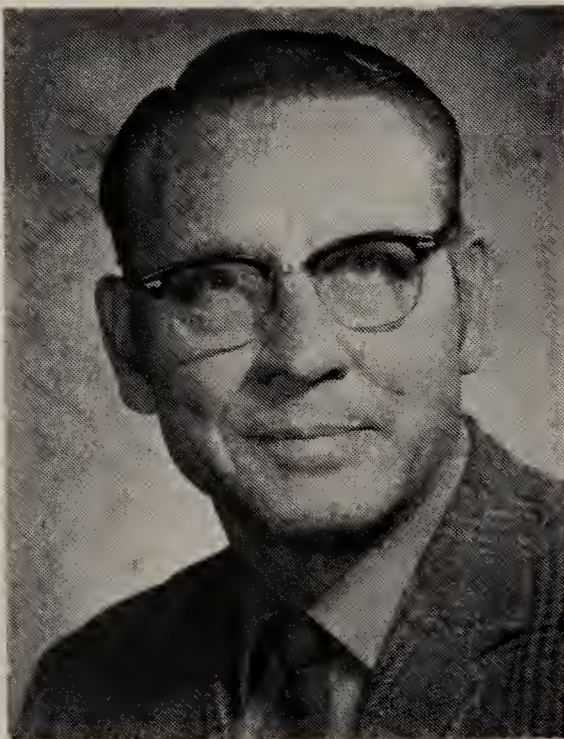
Rev. William J. Amstutz
1919-1921



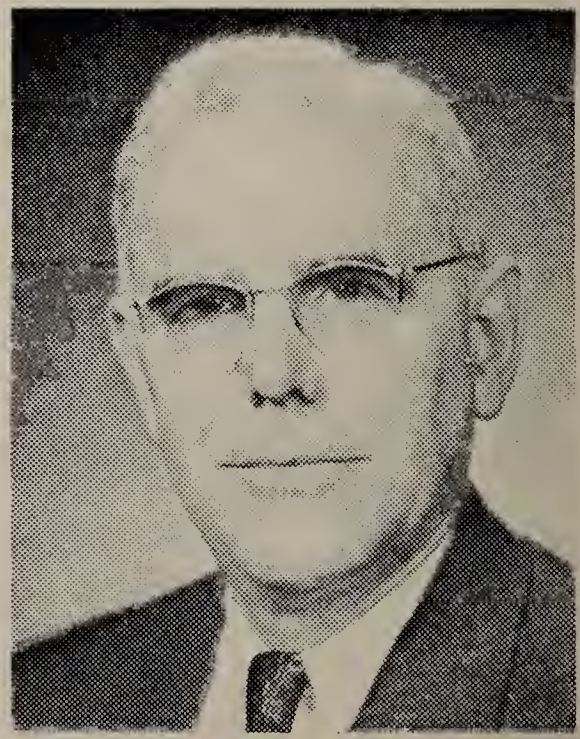
Rev. Henry E. Tropf
1930-1935



Rev. Clarence H. Wiederkehr
1936-1948; 1961-1964



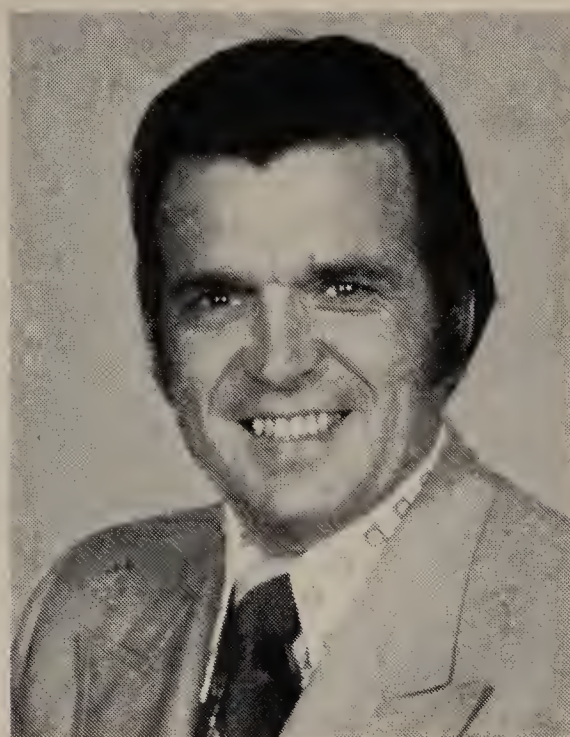
Rev. J. Pritchard Amstutz
1948-1952



Rev. Joseph J. Klopfenstein
1952-1961

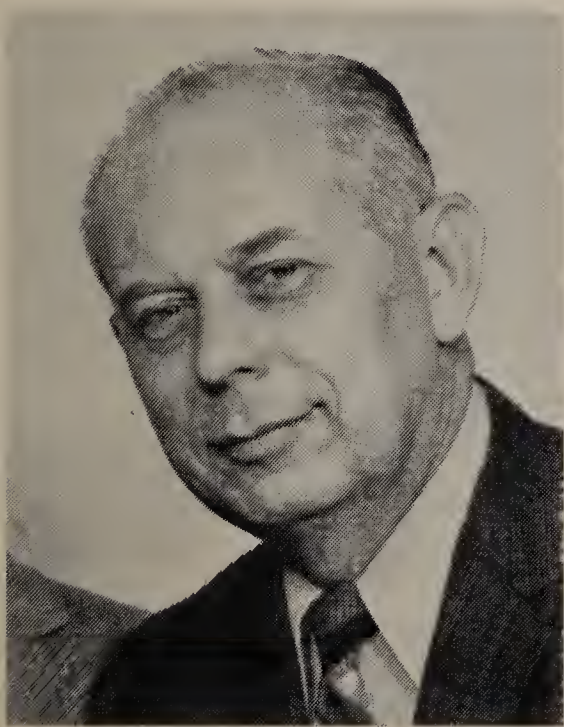


Rev. Gerald I. Gerig
1964-1971

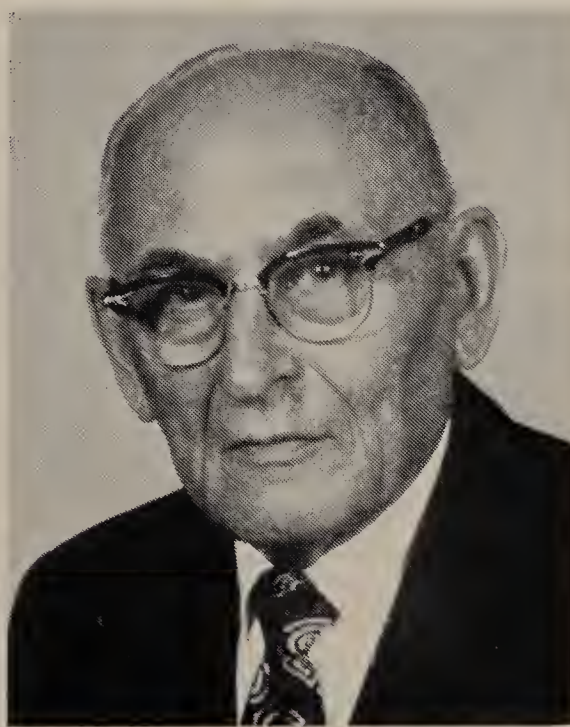


Rev. C. Edwin Prosser
1971-

Ministers of Visitation



Rev. Gareth L. Wiederkehr
1968-1972



Rev. Clarence H. Wiederkehr
1972-

Sunday School Superintendents

David Sprunger	1896	Noah Schindler	1920-1924
J. J. Amstutz	1905	Vilas Schindler	1924-1952
John Merriman	1906-1907	Ornelle Sprunger	1953-1961
David Hirschy	1907-1908	Jerry Carey	1961-1963
H. H. Amstutz	1909-1910	Ornelle Sprunger	1963-1968
D. J. Schwartz	1911-1912	Tony Yoder	1968-1972
Henry Schindler	1912-1919	James Beitler	1972-

Deacons

J. J. Amstutz	Noah Schindler
David Hirschy	Oswin Amstutz
J. U. Amstutz	Preston Zehr
P. L. Amstutz	Homer Inniger
William Reusser	Ornelle Sprunger
David Schindler	Leroy Sprunger
John Yeoman	
Menno S. Hirschy	

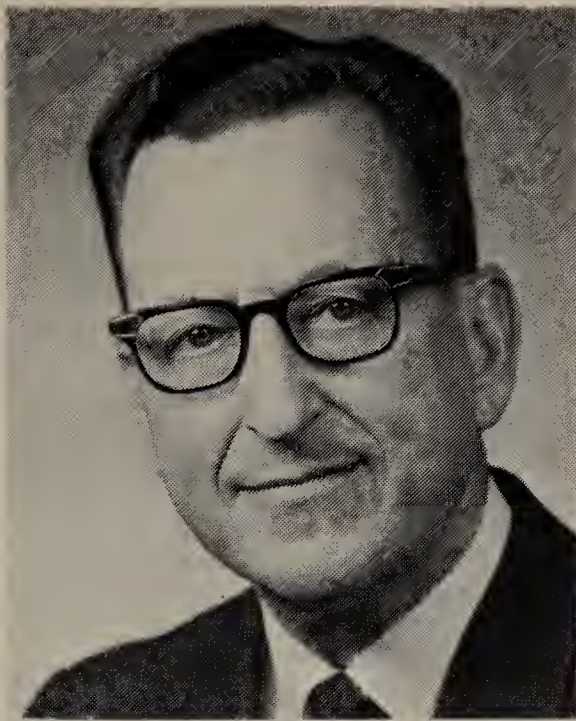
Deaconesses

Mrs. J. A. Sprunger	Mrs. Wesley Amstutz
Mrs. John Abnet	Miss Fannie Schindler
Mrs. Mary Opliger	Miss Ida Hirschy
Mrs. Lucy Hirschy	Mrs. George Erdel
Mrs. Rufus Amstutz	Mrs. Ted Hirschy
Mrs. Vilas Schindler	Mrs. Albert Amstutz
Mrs. Charles Abnet	

Trustees

J. J. Amstutz	Wesley G. Amstutz
J. J. Hirschy	Cyrus Lehman
John Lehman	Leslie Sprunger
John Oyer	Lorris Phillips
David Hirschy	Laverne Sprunger
William Reusser	Don Abnet
Rufus Hirschy	Valier Amstutz
Louis Habegger	Loren Liechty
Noah Schindler	

Some of the custodians who served the church for several years are Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Reusser, Miss Anna R. Sprunger, Mr. and Mrs. Cary Templin, Mr. and Mrs. Carl Amstutz, and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hirschy.



Rev. Tillman Habegger

Tillman Habegger, one of the preaching sons of our congregation, completed his Fort Wayne Bible School training in 1929. The same year he became pastor of the Bucklin, Kansas, Missionary Church. He was pastor of a number of churches and spent several years in furthering his education. He married Evelyn Luginbill of Berne. She was one of his class-mates in high school; they have two daughters, and a son who is deceased.

In 1956 the M.C.A. appointed him to the office of Home Secretary. The capable administration of his office led to a greater expansion and strengthening of churches in the Association. The foreign missionary work is dependent on the strong support of the home churches. In 1958 Rev. Habegger was elected president of the Missionary Church Association. He served in this office for 11 years.

In 1969, when the Missionary Church Association merged with the United Missionary Church, Dr. Kenneth Geiger was named president, and Rev. Habegger became vice-president of the new organization, the Missionary Church.

Miss Elda Amstutz

Elda Amstutz, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John J. Amstutz, was born on March 6, near Berne, Indiana. Like her brothers, Menno and Tillman, she was dedicated to the Lord before her birth. Menno became a minister in the States, and Tillman and Elda spent many years in India.

Elda early learned of sacrificial giving through the example of her godly parents. She was only seven years old when she was saved under the ministry of Rev. J. E. Ramseyer. She was one of the first "Sunshine

Makers". Early in life she volunteered for missionary service in China, and her mother helped her prepare her Missionary Hope Chest.



Miss Elda Amstutz

She graduated from Ft. Wayne Bible Training School in 1922, then took a post-graduate course at the Missionary Training Institute at Nyack, New York.

For two years she worked in the City Rescue Mission at Lima, Ohio; The next year she worked in the home of Dr. and Mrs. Turnbull at Nyack. This contact, plus the political unrest in China, led to her appointment to the Ramabai Mukti Mission in India.

Miss Amstutz arrived in India in 1927. She said, "caring for 60 to 100 girls and lifting up Christ in the villages was my great joy".

Enroute back to India in 1941, her ship stopped in Manilla Bay and she was taken prisoner by the Japanese. She spent more than three years in the infamous Los Banos prison. Her faith remained firm and her prayer was that she might again serve in Mukti Mission. Her rescue, together with 2146 starved prisoners of war, is a most thrilling experience of God's deliverance, just two hours before scheduled execution, (This rescue is related in a book called "Kept", written by Miss Carol Terry, and a chapter by Miss Elda.)

Repatriated in 1945, she slowly recuperated, and in 1946 returned to India and a wonderful welcome at Mukti. She spent many years in evangelistic, medical and literary work. She retired in 1964.

Since retirement Miss Elda has lived in Berne, where her optimistic faith, her helpfulness, and her devotion have endeared her to everyone. She had the privilege of returning to India for a brief visit in 1971.

Rev. and Mrs. Tillman M. Amstutz

Tillman M. Amstutz was born near Berne, Indiana. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. John J. Amstutz, were charter members of the Missionary

Church Association. He was saved at an early age, and had a perfect Sunday School attendance for several years.



Rev. and Mrs. Tillman M. Amstutz

Tillman entered Ft. Wayne Bible Training School in 1916, where he worked to pay his way. He took his final year at Nyack Missionary Training Institute. He arrived in India November 28, 1919.

In 1922 he married Miss Esther De Mann, a missionary he met during language study in India. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in 1972. The careful discipline and love rendered to their five children have molded fine characters—all of them serving the Lord, three as missionaries.

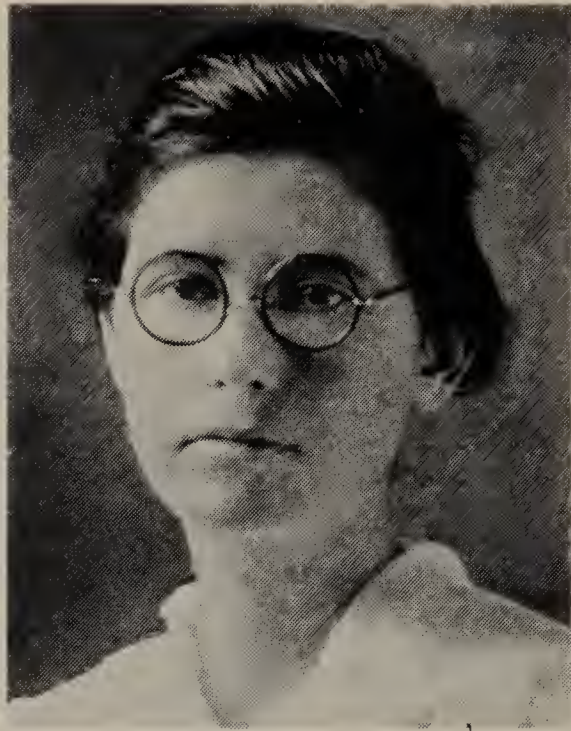
Rev. and Mrs. Amstutz were assigned to do district evangelism. They preached and taught the Good News of the Gospel in towns and villages, at fairs, and in trains. They traveled by bullock cart, by bicycle, by bus, by train, and often on foot, bringing God's message of salvation. They fed the hungry, treated the sick, and comforted the grieving. Tillman labored to reach 276 villages a year.

He also pioneered in the area of literature distribution and set up reading rooms wherever he could. This ministry resulted in friendships with school teachers, community leaders, Hindus, and Mohammedans.

Mrs. Amstutz was a dedicated home-maker and a gracious hostess. But with a trained Bible woman she ministered to those in the homes about her.

Rev. and Mrs. Amstutz retired in 1961, after forty-two years of dedicated missionary service. Their home is in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where Rev. Amstutz assists in the Literature Office of the Billie Graham Crusade.

They are active in the Grand Avenue Alliance Church, where Mr. Amstutz is an elder and does visitation work. Who can measure a life-time spent in service for God?



Miss Mary De Garmo

Miss Mary De Garmo was born in Wauneta, Nebraska on December 15, 1888, to Mr. and Mrs. Peter A. C. De Garmo.

In 1909 she was graduated from the Ft. Wayne Bible Training School. On July 1, 1917, she joined the Berne Missionary Church by letter from the Eden Missionary Church near Stratton, Nebraska. Rev. S. J. Grabill was pastor of the Berne Church.

Miss De Garmo went to China under the direction of the China Mennonite Mission Society on December 3, 1919, and labored there until her death.

She had only two furloughs in twenty-eight years—one from June 1927 to February, 1929, and one from July, 1937 to May, 1939.

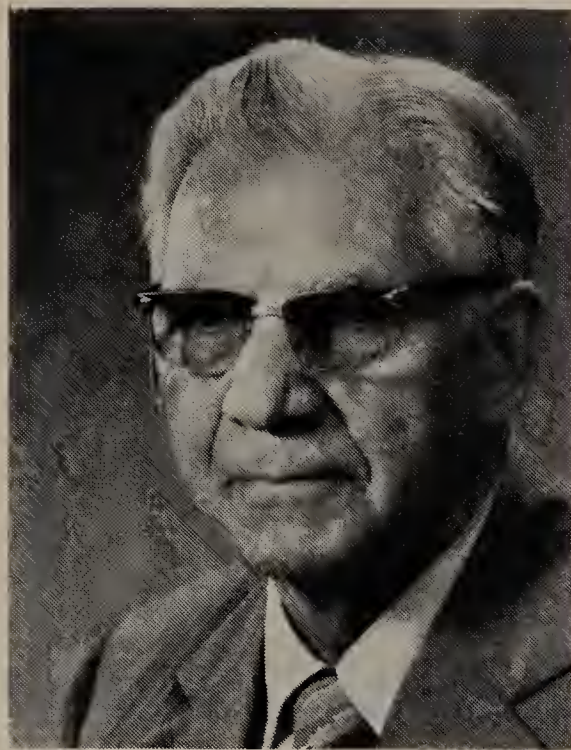
She was very fond of children and taught in a Girl's School for some time. She taught Bible lessons and sewing to many poor Chinese girls.

She took great interest in China's illiterate women and spent weeks and months in the villages teaching the phonetic system. Hundreds of women learned to read their Bibles because of her help.

During the communist uprisings in China, she and her fellow missionaries were stripped many times of all earthly possessions. She chose to remain at her post of duty, and on December 22, 1947, after an attack on the city had subsided, a hand grenade was thrown through the window of her humble cottage. She was fatally injured in the explosion and became a martyr in the great cause of world-wide evangelism. Her last letter was signed, "Yours in Christ for China, Mary De Garmo."

Rev. George Hewitt

Rev. George Hewitt, pastor, evangelist, and missionary, was born in Bothwell, Ontario, Canada, on February 16, 1902.



Rev. George Hewitt

He received his Bible School training at Chicago Evangelistic Institute, Chicago, Illinois. He was pastor of evangelical churches in Illinois from 1929 to 1940. He entered the evangelical ministry in 1940.

From 1947 to 1950 he was pastor of Humboldt Park Gospel Tabernacle Missionary Church in Chicago, Illinois.

In 1950 Rev. Hewitt went to Jamaica to establish a Missionary Church at Mandeville. The work prospered, and many other churches were established across the Island. On Easter Sunday, 1972, more than one thousand attended the service at the Mandeville church.

Rev. Hewitt retired from active pastoral-missionary work in June 1972. His future plans include ministries in evangelism, camp meetings, missionary rallies, and church development.

There are three Hewitt children, George, Jr., Mary, and Sally. There are eleven grandchildren and one great grandchild. Rev. Hewitt's retirement address is 665 N. Behring Street, Berne, Indiana.

Miss Fanny Schindler

Miss Fanny Schindler, eldest child of Jacob and Mary Schindler, was born near Berne, Indiana on February 21, 1894. She walked one mile to Sunday School regularly when she was only six years old.

She was saved in her teens during the Berne Union Meetings. She began attending the Berne Missionary Church, where she heard messages of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. She joined the church on July 18, 1915.

Miss Schindler began teaching public school as soon as she had finished high school. She taught twelve years and was considered a gifted teacher. She taught second grade in Berne for some time.



Miss Fanny Schindler

She felt called of God to enter full-time Christian service, so she entered the Missionary Training Institute of Nyack, New York. The following summer she did colportage work and helped in the mission and street service with the Missionary Workers in Brooklyn.

She went to Africa in 1924 under the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and arrived at Boma, Congo Belge, on October 12. During her first term she traveled through the villages of the Yema, Lolo Mazinga, and Nsumbi districts, helping in schools, preaching, and holding classes for native teachers and preachers.

Her second term was at Kinkonzi. In three different places, each year they had two-week schools for the Christian workers and their wives, plus an evangelistic service every night.

At Maduda for her third term, she prepared lessons for a school of adults and supervised Children's classes. In 1936-38 she translated a grammar book into a Congo dialect for the school. In 1954 she was asked to revise and add to the same book.

The fourth and fifth terms were spent supervising the children's school at Boma and adjoining districts. Also, she was a Sunday-School teacher, and led capable native women in hospital visitation on Sunday afternoons. She was also a profound student and used the English, German, French, Greek and Congolese dialect translations in studying her Bible.

She retired in 1955 after twenty-five years of dedicated missionary service. The citation she received read in part: "You have had a notable part in causing the people that walked in darkness to see a great Light . . . You have taught Africans to teach others to teach others . . . We congratulate you upon a life well spent, a task well done, one that guided many into the path of the just that, as a shining light, shineth more and more into the perfect day."

After her retirement in Berne, the church felt the influence of her godly life. She taught a Sunday School class for some time and also served as a deaconess. She died on July 19, 1967.



Rev. and Mrs. Waldo Schindler

Waldo Schindler, son of Mr. and Mrs. John H. Schindler, was born near Berne, Indiana, on April 8. His grandfather, David Schindler, was the first treasurer of the M.C.A.

When Waldo was fourteen years old, he accepted the Lord as his Saviour, was baptized, and became a member of the Berne Missionary Church.

In 1926 he enrolled in Ft. Wayne Bible Institute, and through the study of God's Word, he realized God's plan for his life.

In 1930 he married Cecile Mae Davison, whom he had met at school. They went to Detroit as associate workers at East Lawn Missionary Church. The next year they took a pastorate at Bucklin, Kansas, where they faced four years of drought and depression. In 1935 they took a pastorate at Wauneta, Nebraska, and in 1938 they went to Clyde, Ohio.

They had never forgotten their call to the mission field, and in 1940 they sailed for the Gabon, Equatorial Africa. There they were used of God in the construction of buildings, translating the Word of God, teaching and overseeing the Bible School, and in pioneer evangelism. Rev. Schindler mastered two foreign languages, received a medal of honor from the vice-president of Gabon for long-time service, and won the respect of his denomination as a missionary statesman.

Mrs. Schindler, small in stature but mighty in spirit, has been a hostess, a teacher, a friend, and always a witness. Six terms were spent in

Africa, and they saw the church in Gabon grow from a few scattered converts to thousands of Christians among several tribes.

The three Schindler daughters are all American housewives. A delightful part of furlough for Rev. and Mrs. Schindler is renewing relationships with their grandchildren.

Rev. and Mrs. Schindler have accepted a call to the Nanakuli Missionary Church, on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. Their work will begin in the fall of 1973.



Miss Agnes Sprunger

Miss Agnes Sprunger, youngest child of John P. and Elizabeth Lehman Sprunger, was born near Berne on September 25, 1885. The family moved to Arkansas where her mother died when Agnes was thirteen months old. Her aunt, Mrs. Samuel (Anna) Liechty, a widow with seven children, went to Arkansas, brought baby Agnes to Berne, and reared her in the Liechty home as a member of the family.

When she was eight years old she was converted during a revival of the Mennonite Church. She was much interested in missions and became a charter member of the First Missionary Church. She attended Bible School and was accepted as a missionary candidate to Congo (*Zaire*) in 1908, but she had to wait eight years to go. In 1909 she was graduated from Ft. Wayne Bible Training School. She took a nurse's training course in Cincinnati, Ohio. For a time she aided in the work of the church in Peoria, Illinois and in Detroit, Michigan.

On March 8, 1916, she left for the Congo (*Zaire*) under the auspices of the Congo Inland Mission and continued in active service for thirty-seven years. She spent 1935 to 1954 in Africa without returning home for a furlough. She often lived in the hope of Philippians 4:19.

Miss Sprunger was a pioneer missionary to the Apende tribe, whose language is known as the Kipende. She did the work of a general missionary in nursing, teaching, singing and translating. She trained some very fine choirs of Africans.

But the monumental contribution to her Christian cause and faith was the translation of the entire New Testament into the Kipende language. She also did much work in the Old Testament, even after retirement. Besides knowing native African tribal dialects, she knew French, English, German and Swiss. She was patient and precise in her work. She taught tribal languages to her successors.

She was the first missionary sent out from the Berne church. She retired on August 11, 1953. She lived in Berne until 1968, when she moved to Swiss Village to make her home. The influence of her quiet, serene Christian character was felt in her home church. She died at Swiss Village on January 11, 1973. At her memorial service Rev. Paul Erdel, Missionary Church overseas director, and Reuben Short, executive secretary of the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, paid tributes to her ministry.

CHRISTIAN HONOR ROLL

Foreign Missionaries

Africa

Harold Wayne Amstutz
Helen Burley
Martel Fennig

* Fannie Schindler
Dr. Robert Schindler
Waldo Schindler
Mrs. Cecil Schindler
* Agnes Sprunger
Kae Linnet Sprunger
Dr. Ernest Steury
Gareth Wiederkehr
Mrs. Treva Wiederkehr

China

* Mary De Garmo

Dominican Republic

Stanley Inniger
Mrs. Becky Inniger

Ecuador

Truman Gottschalk
Pauline Muselman

Hawaii

Mrs. Gladys Leonard

Hong Kong

Mrs. Janean Sprunger

Haiti

John Zurcher
Mrs. Bernadine Zurcher

India

Elda Amstutz
Tillman Amstutz
Luella Burley

Iran

Merlin Inniger

Jamaica

David Biberstein
George Hewitt, Sr.

Japan

Mrs. Kathleen Jacobsen

* These are deceased.

Christian Workers in Home Land

Blanchard Amstutz
Edward Amstutz
Jesse M. Amstutz
* Menno Amstutz
Paul Loren Amstutz
Pritchard Amstutz
Roger Amstutz
* Sylvia Amstutz
Tillman E. Amstutz
Esther Stucky Bailey
Walter Bailey
Maxine Steury Balkema
Mildred Hirschy Bissett
Shirley Ann Steury Burke
Sophia Yoss Faulkner
Brice Fennig
Leon Fennig
Tillman Habegger
Martha Amstutz Heller
Esther Sprunger Hirschy
* Norman Hirschy
Edith Schindler Kattman
Celina Amstutz Klopfenstein
Gordon Klopfenstein

* Salome Schug Kuhnle
James Langham
Mary Alice Steury Lehman
Gladys Amstutz Leonard
Lila Sprunger Miller
Miriam Wiederkehr Ogden
Leona Amstutz Oyer
Edison Reynolds
Carolyn Muselman Russett
Flora Egle Schilling
Lorene Habegger Schrock
Robert Schrock
* Metta Hirschy Sharp
Claudia Jo Amstutz Smith
Ruth Steury Sprunger
Leroy Sprunger
Steven Sprunger
* Lillian Amstutz Stauffer
Wayne Steury
Paul Tropf
Helen Wittwer Welch
Thomas Zehr
Deryll Zurcher
Steven Zurcher

* Deceased

